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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON



February 26, 1963

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Dear

My thoughts on the subject of PNIOs, delayed by fell disease last week, but now sent to you in form for circulation to other members of our Committee: First, PNIOs ought to be abolished altogether; if they cannot be abolished, we might discuss continuing them as follows:

I. MISSION

1 - We should decide whether the mission of PNIOs should be:

a - to serve directly as a program guide for particular intelligence services and activities, or

b - to give a general alert to the intelligence community on national intelligence goals.

2 - If the purpose is to be as in (a) above, specialized PNIOs should be drafted for each of the intelligence activities in view, because an action document of that kind is effective only to the extent that it is tailored to action capabilities.

3 - It follows that under alternative (b), the PNIOs would be expressed in very general terms, with a minimum number of subjects. Their purpose would be to list not all topics requiring priority attention, but only major national intelligence goals, and particularly changes needed in the orientation of our intelligence effort.

4 - I sensed that the Committee was in general agreement on the desirability of what I have called alternative (b). I should so vote myself.

5 - We should carefully in our Committee Report show how PNIOs under alternative (b) would actually be used and would work down into the operating areas of the community. Obviously, such PNIOs would not by themselves serve as direct guidance for programming collection or production. Further steps would be needed for the translation of broad PNIOs into specific action proposals. These steps might involve:

a - Examination of (1) the extent to which the activities concerned have the capabilities to contribute to goals requiring increased attention, and (2) the impact of reduced priorities.

b - Determination

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Executive Secretary,
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- b - Determination of the magnitude of effort that should be directed against targets which contribute to goals of increased or reduced priority.
- c - Development of concrete action proposals for specific collection or production programs.

II. EFFECT

1 - We can further define what we mean by PNIOs if we describe what happens when they have been prepared.

2 - I take it that what happens is that new PNIOs at once become the subject of action under 5a and b above by interagency groups or committees set up to guide the major services and activities of the community. Thus, I assume that the issuance of new PNIOs would at once be followed by meetings of, for example:

NIS Committee
Intelligence Priorities Committee
SIGINT Committee
NIE Planning Group
COMOR.

3 - These groups would be responsible for submitting to the USIB within some interval appropriate to each one, a broad report and recommendations that would show how the activities involved are specifically expected to respond to the broad PNIOs.

4 - We might consider the question whether groups of this sort should not in advance of the formulation of PNIOs make general recommendations of topics which they thought suited for inclusion in a statement of changes in intelligence goals.

III. FORM and SUBSTANCE

1 - PNIOs should be few in number.

2 - They should be broad in substance, but not through the inclusion of words that cover all aspects of any problem that comes up -- rather, through exclusion of details in favor of the simplest possible statement. Thus, for example, I quote present PNIO I B, underlining unnecessary words:

"Present and prospective Soviet and Chinese Communist capabilities for nuclear (why not "mass destruction" instead?) attack on the US or US nuclear delivery forces anywhere by any

means;

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means; the identification and precise geodetic location of targets essentially related to such capabilities; the deployment of Soviet forces capable of nuclear attack to positions outside of Soviet territory." (Too often words like those I have underlined are inserted by particular interests; they are really action targets, not PNIOs).

The item would therefore read:

"Soviet and Chinese Communist capabilities for nuclear attack on the US or US nuclear delivery forces; location of targets related to such capabilities."

3 - To avoid the problem of annual repetition, we should consider a list of PNIOs which includes only priorities that have gone up since the previous list or priorities that have gone down. I myself see little use in filling up our space with obvious unchanging priorities like the present Group I.

Sincerely,



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